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NRC Schedules Regulatory Conference to Discuss Apparent Violation At Columbia Generating Station

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will meet with officials from Energy Northwest on June 15 to discuss a preliminary inspection finding related to Columbia Generating Station's emergency preparedness plan. The plant is located near Richland, Wash.

The 1 p.m. meeting at the NRC's Region IV office at 1600 E. Lamar Blvd., Arlington, Texas, is open to the public. NRC officials will answer questions from the public after the business portion of the conference. A telephone bridge will be available for the meeting by calling 888-989-4408 and entering passcode 5456418.

The NRC evaluates regulatory performance at commercial nuclear plants with a color-coded process that classifies inspection findings as green, white, yellow or red in order of increasing safety significance. The NRC has preliminarily determined that the inspection finding has low to moderate (white) safety significance, which may require additional inspections, regulatory actions and oversight.

During an NRC inspection, inspectors determined that the licensee's emergency response procedures did not include a measure for sheltering in place for the public as a protective action that can be recommended to offsite authorities in the event of a nuclear emergency. Energy Northwest also removed protective action recommendations for planned releases of radioactive material during an accident and inappropriately delegated responsibility for some decision making for protective action recommendations that could have caused delays.

The licensee has resolved these issues and put in place measures to prevent recurrence. Licensees recommend protective actions to local and state officials who then make the actual decision about what protective actions the public will take.

No decision on the final safety significance of the finding or any additional NRC actions will be made at the conference. That decision will be announced at a later time.